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Martinez hails end of era of guilt

By Richard Slusser
WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF

For Eugenio R. Martinez, one of the four Cuban-Americans convicted for their roles in the June 17, 1972, break-in at the Democratic Party headquarters in the Watergate complex, his pardon last week by President Reagan marks "the end of an era."

Martinez, 60, said a year ago that time had passed rapidly but that his conviction seemed like a weight. On four occasions. Presidents Ford and Carter had denied his request for a pardon.

The pardon, he said, is "something I've always hoped to have — my civil rights restored — to be the citizen I'd like to be."

Martinez said he feels much better "because I can vote, I can be part of the community and my family can feel much better about it." He said he will register as a Republican.

Martinez also said that the pardon will enable him to leave his children "with a good name."



Martinez, 60, and his wife, Sylvia, 55, live in a modest apartment in Miami Beach. They have four children.

Before he was recruited by Bernard Barker, also convicted in the Watergate burglary trials, Martinez had worked for Barker's real estate firm.

He also provided information to the Central Intelligence Agency, and was on the CIA payroll at the time of the break-in.

A Cuban refugee, Martinez did most of his CIA work on Cuba-related matters. His associates called him "Musculo" because of his physique.

He took part in the Bay of Pigs invasion and he also participated in hundreds of smaller missions in the early 1960s under the auspices of the CIA during the secret U.S. actions against Fidel Castro.

It was old CIA associates who recruited him for the White House "plumbers unit" set up by President Nixon to probe leaks to reporters.

For his role in the Watergate break-in — to plant a wiretap on the telephone of the national Democratic chairman — Martinez was sentenced to one to four years in prison. He served 15 months at Eglin Air Force Base, Fla., in a minimum-security prison.

Martinez also was convicted of conspiracy in another break-in — into the office of Dr. Lewis J. Fielding, who was the psychiatrist of Daniel Ellsberg, a suspect in the leaking of the Pentagon Papers to the press. However, that conviction was reversed on appeal.

In 1977, lawyers for Nixon's 1972 campaign organization, called the Committee to Re-elect the President, agreed

to pay \$50,000 each to Martinez and the three others who had been recruited for the Watergate burglary.